

# RISE REPORTER

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Frank Thielen (right) and Randy Olson both work at Pentair's SCO plant in Anoka and have been great friends for more than 20 years. They are featured in a special "welcome" video from Pentair, the premier sponsor of the *Celebrate Rise Fundraising Gala*. See page 3.

# Dixie's roles as parent, advocate make her an effective Rise Board member

Most of my life has been centered around important issues pertaining to people who have disabilities," said Dixie Mengelkoch, mother of Tracy who works in Rise's CIP-Coon Rapids program. Dixie has been a member of Rise's Board of Directors for more than 20 years. "As a parent, you can never stop advocating for your child and trying to make a difference."

Even before Tracy was born, Dixie was a member of the Jaycees, a leadership training organization. She designed and implemented a program in cooperation with Spring Lake Park High School so students could take weekly bus trips to (then) Cambridge State Hospital to visit children and adults with severe intellectual disabilities and related conditions who were institutionalized there. "I wanted the kids to get to know the patients as individuals who belonged in our communities," Dixie remembers. "It was a tremendously eye-opening experience for them."

A few years later, Tracy, who was a baby at the time, incurred brain damage from a staph infection following eye surgery. Dixie's "side career" as

an advocate for people with disabilities kicked into high gear.

"I was a rebel in those days," she said with a laugh. "I advocated for Tracy to be mainstreamed in school even before we called it that. I was active in the (then) Anoka County ARC and along with other parents, worked for change on issues that directly affected our kids and community programs and services, including Rise. When Don Masterson, who in 1991 was mayor of Spring Lake Park and serving on Rise's Board of Directors, asked me to join, I was eager to help."

Tracy, who is now 46, was born at the right time, said Dixie. "Things were really starting to change in the early 1970s, and theories of normalization and mainstreaming were starting to take hold in schools, at work, and in the community."

When Tracy, the youngest of four girls, completed her public education at age 21, she started working at Rise.

"It was a great fit for her. I appreciate Chet and Gladys Tollefson's pioneering efforts to get Rise started, which made it possible for Tracy to go to work and be a part of the community.

"As a parent, you just want your child to be happy, safe, and like what they're doing in life," Dixie added. "At Rise, I know that Tracy absolutely loves her job at Chili's restaurant and is so proud of her work. She enjoys her friends and co-workers, is supervised by people who are dedicated to her success, and is in a safe environment. She is doing what she wants to do. To me, that's the ultimate. As her mother, what more could I ask for?"

"Dixie's 'rebel spirit' has been a wonderful asset to our Rise Board as well," said Rise's President Lynn Noren. "Dixie approaches governance decision-making rooted in her perspective as a parent. It helps all of us at Rise focus on what is important."

Dixie stated that the possible changes the Employment First policy, as proposed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, are of great concern to her.

"We need to make sure that future state policies are rational and the process is in place for a positive flow. I think some draft policies could severely limit the choices that Tracy and others have in their employment options and living situations. I want Tracy to be able to make her own choices – and believe me, she knows what she wants. I will support her choices.

"I have always been so appreciative of Rise and it's been exciting to see all the progress over the years. I think Rise staff are innovative and have always been focused on the right ideas, approaching situations with a positive and enthusiastic attitude. They are committed to the welfare and success of the people they serve. This is what makes Rise successful.

"I plan to stay active in advocacy," Dixie continued. "You have to be ever-vigilant because with government programs and funding, things can change quickly and dramatically. You can never sit back and think your work is done; you always need to keep an eye out. I want to help make sure people have a choice as to how they live their lives with consideration of their vulnerabilities. I see Rise as a critical part of this process.

"I have enjoyed the years serving on the Board, to be on the 'cutting edge' of change and positive progress," Dixie added. "I appreciate all the people who have served on the Rise Board because their vision and gifts have helped make Rise what it is today. As a parent, I say, 'thank you!'"



Dixie with daughter Tracy on her graduation day from high school.



# Pentair co-workers Randy and Frank have built a lasting friendship that goes far beyond the workplace

It was a great Minnesota summer evening for a concert in the park. Among the hundreds of music enthusiasts who had gathered to listen to live blue grass music were Randy Olson and Frank Thielen.

The two men met back in 1993 when a crew from Rise's Community Integration Program (CIP)-Coon Rapids began working at Pentair's SCO (Stainless and Composite Operation) facility in Anoka. Frank was a hard-working guy and his outgoing, friendly personality quickly helped him make friends at Pentair.

"I was Frank's unofficial job coach, along with his Rise supervisor," said Randy, a fabrication operator who has worked at Pentair for 33 years. "We just seemed to hit it off from the beginning. When our SCO team was going to move to Pentair's plant in Brooklyn Center, we wanted to take Frank with us because we all liked working with him so much. Transportation was an issue, so we took turns picking him up and taking him to work."

A few years later, both Randy and Frank returned to Pentair's Anoka plant. Frank refers to himself as "the junk-away guy" and collects the thin plastic coating that Pentair workers peel off the stainless steel they are cutting and forming into various container products.

"Frank is all over the plant and has a great sense of camaraderie with the employees; he is quite a morale booster," said Randy.

But Frank and Randy's relationship goes far deeper than just being co-



*Randy and Frank enjoyed free summer concerts at the Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park on Thursday evenings.*

workers; the two have developed a great friendship. It started with Randy accompanying Frank to Pentair-sponsored outings such as picnics and moonlight bowling. Randy was in a golf league so he invited Frank to drive his cart for him. They both enjoy going to Twins baseball games; they attend People of Praise church in Anoka together. Randy introduced Frank to fishing – and he was hooked!

Frank recently bowled a 231 game. "And the whole bowling alley heard about each and every strike," Randy remembered with a laugh. "Frank doesn't like to bowl with me, though, because he's too competitive and wants to win every game." Randy also coaches Frank's Special Olympics bowling team.

Frank and Randy took a two-week vacation earlier this summer, traveling through the Black Hills into Colorado where a friend of Randy's runs a *Fishing Without Boundaries* program for people with disabilities. There Frank was set up with a fish-

ing guide and buddy and had the thrill of reeling in some impressive-sized fish.

Frank is well-known in the area. He enjoys walking in the evening to the local grocery store and carries a large garbage bag with him to pick up trash there and back home. Neighbors appreciate his efforts and often treat him to a can of pop.

"Wherever we go, there are people who greet Frank," said Randy. "A few years ago, he and his brother were on a mountaintop in Germany and ran into someone who knew Frank! He's just a great guy and people really enjoy him."

"When I met Frank 20 years ago, I never would have imagined that we'd still be friends today."

"Randy and I are buddies," Frank said. "We're good buddies."

The two men will be featured in a video shown at the *Celebrate Rise Fundraising Gala* on October 2.

# RISE to the OCCASION

## THIRD ANNUAL *Celebrate Rise* FUNDRAISING GALA

Thursday, October 2, 2014  
5:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Minneapolis Marriott Northwest  
(formerly the Northland Inn)  
7025 Northland Drive, Brooklyn Park

*Attire:* From business casual to  
Old Hollywood glamour or  
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Accessible, free parking | Live music

Master of Ceremonies:  
Jason DeRusha, WCCO-TV

5:30 Social Hour, Cash bar, and Games  
6:30 Dinner  
7:30 Awards Program, Live Auction,  
and Fund-a-Need for the  
Advancing Lives Fund

Premier Sponsor:  PENTAIR

Register online by September 22 at: [Celebraterise2014.eventbrite.com](http://Celebraterise2014.eventbrite.com)

If you have questions about the event  
or wish to inquire about event  
sponsorship, contact Noel McCormick  
at Rise: *phone:* 763-783-2832  
*email:* nmccormick@rise.org



*Menu:* Fresh garden salad with mixed field  
greens, Chicken Wellington, sour cream  
mashed potatoes, and acorn roasted squash  
*Vegetarian selection:* Marinated vegetable  
kebob with Israeli coconut cous cous  
*Plus:* Trio of desserts

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*to enjoy a*  
SELF-DETERMINED LIFE

# Lori Mayo mentors fellow data entry clerks on how to use their communication devices most effectively

Having used a customized communication device since her early teens, Lori has seen technology make considerable advancements in those years. She uses an ECO2 device not only to communicate with others, but to perform her data entry work at Rise's Data Ability program in Crystal.

Seven years ago, Lori Mayo had the opportunity to be one of eight people in the U.S. to attend a special two-week ACES course at Temple University in Philadelphia where she honed her computer and technology skills. She was eager to share what she learned with others.

"Lori is a natural leader among her co-workers," said DTH Coordinator Maureen Trost, who was able to accompany Lori to Temple and works with her at Data Ability. "She is extremely proficient with her ECO2 device using Bluetooth technology. She also uses this device to send and receive text messages. It's amazing – and Lori is absolutely the perfect mentor to share her enthusiasm and knowledge with other data entry clerks."



From left are Eric Peterson, Corey Johnson, Lori Mayo, and Kari Wagner. They meet every other Thursday to learn more about using technology to the fullest.

Every other Thursday afternoon, a small group of Data Ability co-workers gather to increase their proficiency. People use several different kinds of devices, including an iPad, ECO2, and Dynavox, depending on the individuals' specific needs. Lori engages them in specific topics of conversation with the goal of improving their knowledge of their devices' functions and capabilities.

Lori has really helped her co-workers expand their use of their communication devices. For instance, when Kari Wagner learned more about how to use a Bluetooth device in conjunction with her ECO2, it increased her data entry productivity more than 20 times!

"She's awesome!" Kari said about Lori by selecting words and phrases using an infrared dot on her eyeglasses. As Kari composes, her ECO2 speaks for her.

Eric Peterson uses an iPad and indicated that he thinks it's fun to get together with the group and learn new things. Corey Johnson, who communicates through a Dynavox, agreed wholeheartedly.

Although Medical Assistance will pay for the device itself, MA doesn't cover other necessary things like batteries, battery chargers, repairs, programs, or Bluetooth devices. These are all items that people could request support from the new ADVANCING LIVES FUNDS to cover.

At this year's *Celebrate Rise Fundraising Gala*, we will be raising money for Rise's new **ADVANCING LIVES FUND** to support people who could use immediate assistance for **employment, housing or personal growth needs** that aren't covered by other funding sources.

**People can apply for funds to help pay for important things** like training or certification course tuition, car repairs, household goods, conference fees, tools, or suitable work attire. If you are not able to attend the *Celebrate Rise Fundraising Gala*, but would like to make a donation to Rise's **ADVANCING LIVES FUND**, visit [www.rise.org/46/celebrate-rise-fundraising-gala.html](http://www.rise.org/46/celebrate-rise-fundraising-gala.html).



# 500+ Rise employees, family & friends Celebrate Summer!



*It was a great way to spend a Minnesota summer Sunday afternoon -- good food, great friends and co-workers, festive music, generous supporters -- and plenty of FUN at Aquatore Park in Blaine. For more picnic photos, check out Rise's Flickr page at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/126063808@N07/>*



*Very special thanks to our great community supporters:*  
**Coon Rapids North Star Lions**

**Balloons Galore & More  
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Midwest Vending  
Old Country Buffet, Coon Rapids**



# Rise expands community work site evaluations to provide people with indepth data for customized career planning

Mitch Ries says that one day, he hopes to work with older people in a nursing home setting. “They need help and I’m one of those people who likes to help others. I’m going to attend Anoka Tech to study to be an occupational therapy assistant.”

Mitch graduated this year from Andover High School and had never worked before, so it was important to find out during his vocational evaluation at Rise if he really would like to work in a nursing home. Rise Evaluator JoAnn Beaudette could assess Mitch’s “soft work skills” at the same time.

JoAnn and Jennifer Sudmeier, service team leader for Rise’s Vocational Evaluation and Milestones programs, have spent the past year expanding evaluation opportunities by partnering with area employers to provide assessments in industry work settings.

“Conducting a work evaluation in a industry-based job settings gives the evaluator so much more valuable information than the standardized tests we used to use,” said Jennifer Sudmeier, service team leader for Rise’s Evaluation and Internal Services programs. “We need to assess the person’s ability to perform the ‘hard skills’ of the job, physical tolerances, and general work skills, along with ‘soft skills’ like reliability, work ethic, how he or she gets along with co-workers, flexibility, learning, style, etc.”

“An industry-based work setting also helps an individual determine if work in this field is a good fit,”



*Greg Netland has completed a two-year course in drafting and machinery and wants to go into mechanical drafting. He’s currently doing a Job Try-Out evaluation at Cummins Power Generation in Fridley for four weeks.*

JoAnn added. “We are always looking at new opportunities to set up customized evaluations to address an individual’s particular needs and interests.”

Current community business evaluation sites include:

- Arc’s Value Village, Brooklyn Park, New Hope, and Richfield: Retail
- Broadway Pizza, Champlin: Food portioner/prep cook
- CAPI, Minneapolis: Clerical
- Cummins Power Generation, Fridley: Assembly, recycling
- Fairbault Foods, Elk River: Packaging
- Liberty Carton, Brooklyn Park: Assembly
- Pentair, Anoka: Assembly
- St. Anthony Health Center, Minneapolis: Dietary aide

People spend between two and six weeks in Rise’s Job Try-Out program. In addition to assessing their skills and abilities as an employee, the evaluators can also determine other services they may need to achieve their career goals. Rise pays the individual’s wages and covers Worker’s Compensation so the employer has no costs or liability.

Participating employers also have the opportunity to meet and observe a potential applicant as the individual works.

Rise staff provide direction and support specific to the needs of the individual, and if the employer has any issues or concerns, a Rise staff will address those immediately so this can be a positive experience for everyone.

For more information, contact Jennifer at 763-783-2813; email: [jsudmeier@rise.org](mailto:jsudmeier@rise.org); or JoAnn at 763-792-2443; [jbeaudette@rise.org](mailto:jbeaudette@rise.org).



*Mitch is enjoying his Job Try-Out at St. Anthony Health Center as he hopes to work as an occupational therapy assistant with older adults some day.*

# Getting it together one step at a time with support from family and Rise boosts John's confidence in his new life

Having trained in prison for 1,500 hours to be an apprentice barber, John Hawkins said he is more than ready to make some positive changes in his life. John has spent much of his adult life incarcerated and it took him three months to find a master barber in town who was willing to give him an opportunity to work another 1,500 hours to qualify for his master's license.

John said that this time he feels more confident that he will be successful primarily because he now has the support of his family, including six children, who range from 9 to 32 years old, plus his six grandchildren. John also enjoys being with people at the Church of the Master's Love in North Minneapolis.

After his release from prison, John was staying at a temporary shelter. He called a crisis line and was referred to Rise's Anoka County Housing Support Services program for transitional housing. "It was one of the best things that ever happened to me," John added.

He moved into one of Rise's transitional housing units in Spring Lake Park in May and will be able to live there for up to two years as he works on developing his career, increasing his earnings, and becoming more self-sufficient. Housing Practitioner Brenda Sorgdrager meets with John weekly to help him set and achieve his goals. She is also helping him submit housing application forms for

when he's ready to move out of Rise's transitional housing.

"I really like living here for now," said John of his furnished apartment. "I have a place to call home, a place that's just for me, and it feels good."

Brenda helped John secure a much-needed and appreciated donation from St. Timothy's Church in Blaine to purchase basic equipment so he could launch his barbering career at a shop in Anoka County. He plans to apply to Rise's new ADVANCING LIVES FUND when it is established in October which will enable him to take some additional barbering courses at Minneapolis Community and Technical College in downtown Minneapolis.

He hopes to greatly expand his clientele in the coming months. John works primarily evenings, six

days a week at the barber shop, and spends many days looking for additional employment. Brenda is encouraging and supportive of John's job search.

"Brenda is my rock," he added. "She keeps me grounded and gives me the extra nudge or push I need sometimes. I couldn't make all these changes without her; she's a great counselor."

"It's really a pleasure working with John because he is so motivated -- he really makes my job easier," said Brenda. "He knows exactly what he wants to do with his life and I'm just trying to give him the tools to do it. It's all John."

"My kids see the big difference in me and they love it," said John. "They will call just to see how I'm doing and that really makes my day -- it keeps me motivated to do well. My daughter tells me how proud she is of me. I can't let them down and I can't let myself down."

"Without Rise, I don't know where I'd be," said John "It takes a lot of stress off me to know that I can take my time to get it all together, one step at a time. I can see a great future for me now."



Brenda and John meet once a week to keep moving forward with his housing and career goals. John is featured in the ADVANCING LIVES FUND video which will be shown at the Celebrate Rise Fundraising Gala on October 2.



## *Nancy gets back on track with help from Rise -*

# Great job, new home gives Nancy hope for the future

As soon as I walked through the door into the plant, I felt like I was home," said Nancy Ellefson, referring to Cambridge Metal & Plastic in Cambridge. "This job was like a miracle for me. I had done foundry work for eight years before, so I felt comfortable that I could do the job."

Having a great job that she enjoys and is good at is a key piece in Nancy's quest for getting her life back on track and moving forward to build a happy life for her and her kids.

Having spent 22 years addicted to drugs and five attempts at treatment, Nancy said she finally found what she needed to get and stay clean at the Tapestry – Meridian Behavioral Health program in St. Paul. She then lived for four months in Serenity Haven, a half-way house in Mora, and was referred by Kanabec County Social Services to Rise's Mental Health and Housing Supports program in Cambridge to begin planning her move back into the community.

Monica Zachau, a Rise housing support specialist helped Nancy qualify for a \$200 monthly subsidy so she could set up an apartment for her two children. On the first of September, Nancy was excited to move her family to a house she is renting out in the country. Monica is helping her find furniture and household items as Nancy had lost most everything she needed to make a home.

A placement specialist with Rise's Employment Innovations program in Mora helped Nancy find a part-



*Nancy would like to apply for funds from the ADVANCING LIVES FUND to help her purchase a much-needed "new used" car or household goods to set up a new home for her family.*

time job at a local pizza restaurant which eased her back into employment. But after a few months, she was ready to move on to something that would enable her to be more self-sufficient. Jose Clemente from Rise's Lindstrom office worked with Nancy to develop a customized career plan and find just the right job to match her skills, interests, and income needs.

"I guess I was just sick and tired of being sick and tired," Nancy said candidly. "I always knew I was on the wrong path, but addiction was all I had known since childhood, and I really didn't have anyone to help me break that cycle. Once I found the right resources for me, and decided to be open and honest with everyone who was trying to help me, I made real progress."

Nancy said the best part is the good people she works with as well as the wide range of job tasks she is learning. Cambridge Metals & Plastics, Inc. manufactures parts and accessories for sports vehicles. It offers custom metal stamping, sheet metal fabrication, welding,

painting, tube bending, product design, and engineering services.

"Jose has been a tremendous help to me – he's straight with me and keeps pushing me; he's a good listener and I sure listen to him."

"I'm so proud of Nancy and happy for how things are changing for her," said Jose, who continues to meet with her on a regular basis to help ensure her success on the job. "I only want the best for her and she's making great progress."

"Nancy is a true trooper," said Monica. "I have never met someone who has worked so hard to reestablish a good life so her children can thrive and have the life she never had. She has been an inspiration to me."

Nancy is among those featured in a special video that will debut at the *Celebrate Rise Fundraising Gala* on October 2. She plans to apply for support from Rise's new ADVANCING LIVES FUND to help her purchase additional household items or a new used car through Pine Technical College.

# Destiny taps into available resources to enhance her educational, employment opportunities and reach her goals

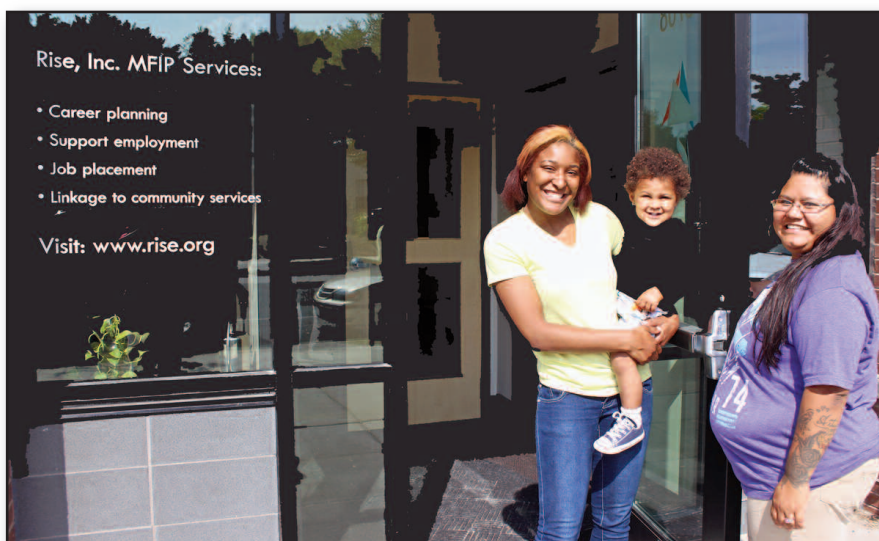
Juggling the demands of an almost-two-year-old and working full-time can be quite a challenge for a single mom. But Destiny Howard approaches both with a positive and joyful attitude.

Having worked in entry-level retail and food service jobs since she was 15 years old, Destiny always knew she wanted to build a promising career and make something more of her life. She graduated from Burnsville High School in 2010, set her sights on a career in health care, and looked forward to going to college.

As a new mother in December 2012 receiving MFIP (Minnesota Family Investment Program), Destiny had a one-year exemption during which she could continue to receive her welfare benefits and not work.

But instead of simply biding her time, this motivated, hard-charging 22-year-old young woman used the year to complete an eleven-month medical assistant course in March 2014 at Anthem College in St. Louis Park. When Destiny applied to Hennepin County for child care and other benefits, she was referred to Rise for career planning, job placement, and support services.

Veronica Ruiz, who then was serving a year as an AmeriCorps member with Rise's MFIP program and is now a placement specialist, assisted Destiny with her career planning. In addition, Veronica helped Destiny qualify for interview clothes, child care, bus cards, work uniforms, and other employment-related resources.



*Destiny Howard continues to receive support from Placement Specialist Veronica Ruiz at Rise's Pathways office in South Minneapolis.*

Veronica also helped Destiny connect with the Gateway Program through Northpoint Health & Wellness Center to attend job clubs, develop a resume and cover letter, and practice job interviewing at Rise's Pathways office in South Minneapolis.

Destiny had two great internships at local medical centers, and then after almost two months of intensive job searching in this competitive field, was thrilled to be hired as a medical assistant in June at AdvaCare Clinics in Bloomington. The medical team there provides patients with a multifaceted, holistic approach to their therapy needs.

"I worked hard every day to find a good job," said Destiny. "I was either here at Rise or at the college's career center using every resource available to me. They were great stepping stones for me as I didn't want to stay on welfare."

Destiny's work day begins early; she

leaves her home in North Minneapolis by bus to drop her son Kane off at day care in South Minneapolis, and then travels on to her job in Bloomington. She and Kane don't often get back home much before 8:30 p.m.

"I am so impressed with Destiny's drive and ambition to make a good life for her and Kane," said Veronica. "She is taking all the right steps and I know she will be successful at whatever she sets as a goal. I'm very proud of her."

"Don't get me wrong – it's hard – but so worth it," said Destiny candidly. "I keep going for Kane; I want to be a good role model for him. I am proving to myself that I can do this. I truly appreciate all Rise and Veronica have done to help me."

Destiny would someday like to be a physician's assistant and will attend Inver Hills Community College in the fall to earn an associate's degree in biology.



# Looking for a great career?? Come work for Rise!



We pride ourselves on hiring the brightest and best to help us carry out our important mission. Rise offers competitive salaries and benefits packages, good working conditions, great co-workers, and interesting jobs.

For more information, check out Rise's current job openings at [www.rise.org/2/join-our-staff.html](http://www.rise.org/2/join-our-staff.html)  
(Here is CIP Service Team Leader Becky Cordes with Steve Johnson.)

## MOHR recognizes Rise's Jessica Robey as Twin Cities' *Job Coach of the Year*



Jessica Robey, an employment consultant from Rise's SES-Hennepin program, was selected as MOHR's (Minnesota Organization for Habilitation and Rehabilitation) *Job Coach of the Year* for the Twin Cities metro area.

Jessica began working at Rise as an AmeriCorps member in September 2010, assisting job placement staff with their case loads. After her year of AmeriCorps service, she was offered a position in August 2011 as a placement specialist with Rise's Supported Employment Services (SES)-Hennepin County program.

Jessica currently is an employment consultant working on a special program with MOFAS (Minnesota Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome) funding, assisting individuals with FASD find employment. In addition, she is working with residents at the Adult Corrections Facility in Hennepin County obtain employment upon their release.

"These projects are new grants which take quite a bit more work than an established one," said Rise Mental Health Coordinator Anne Mornes. "Jessica has been recruiting for both projects and setting up procedures for the referrals we receive. For a short time, she was juggling three caseloads. Jessica's work ethic is exemplary. She works hard to make sure that the services she provides her clients are nothing but the best. Jessica goes out of her way to find resources that are beyond employment. She has helped many people find housing resources, manage their benefits, and obtain appropriate work clothing necessary for their job search."

Jessica was featured in an article in the August 2014 Hennepin Health Newsletter for her good work. It's at: [http://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MNHENNE/bulletins/cae07c#.U\\_YZG74DiZ0.facebook](http://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MNHENNE/bulletins/cae07c#.U_YZG74DiZ0.facebook).

"The best part of working in this field is seeing people's progress and knowing that Rise's services have

impacted their success," said Robey. "The transformation of individuals through the job-seeking process to becoming successfully employed is amazing to see. Being a part of their path to self-sufficiency and seeing the positive effects of employment is very rewarding."

In addition to Jessica, Rise congratulates CIP Specialists Elizabeth Hoosline, Alfred Cheaye, and Wondor Nuah from Rise's Community Integration Program in Coon Rapids, as well as Eric Dewey, an employment support specialist from Rise's Employment Innovations program in Lindstrom, who were also nominated for a MOHR award.



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## RISE REPORTER

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